

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947

Volume VIII, Number 4

Rachel W. Coffin, Editor

Week of March 17, 1947

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1947 PRODUCTIONS

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THEATRE OPENINGS

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originally appeared in these New York newspapers

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK MIRROR NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN NEW YORK POST NEW YORK TIMES

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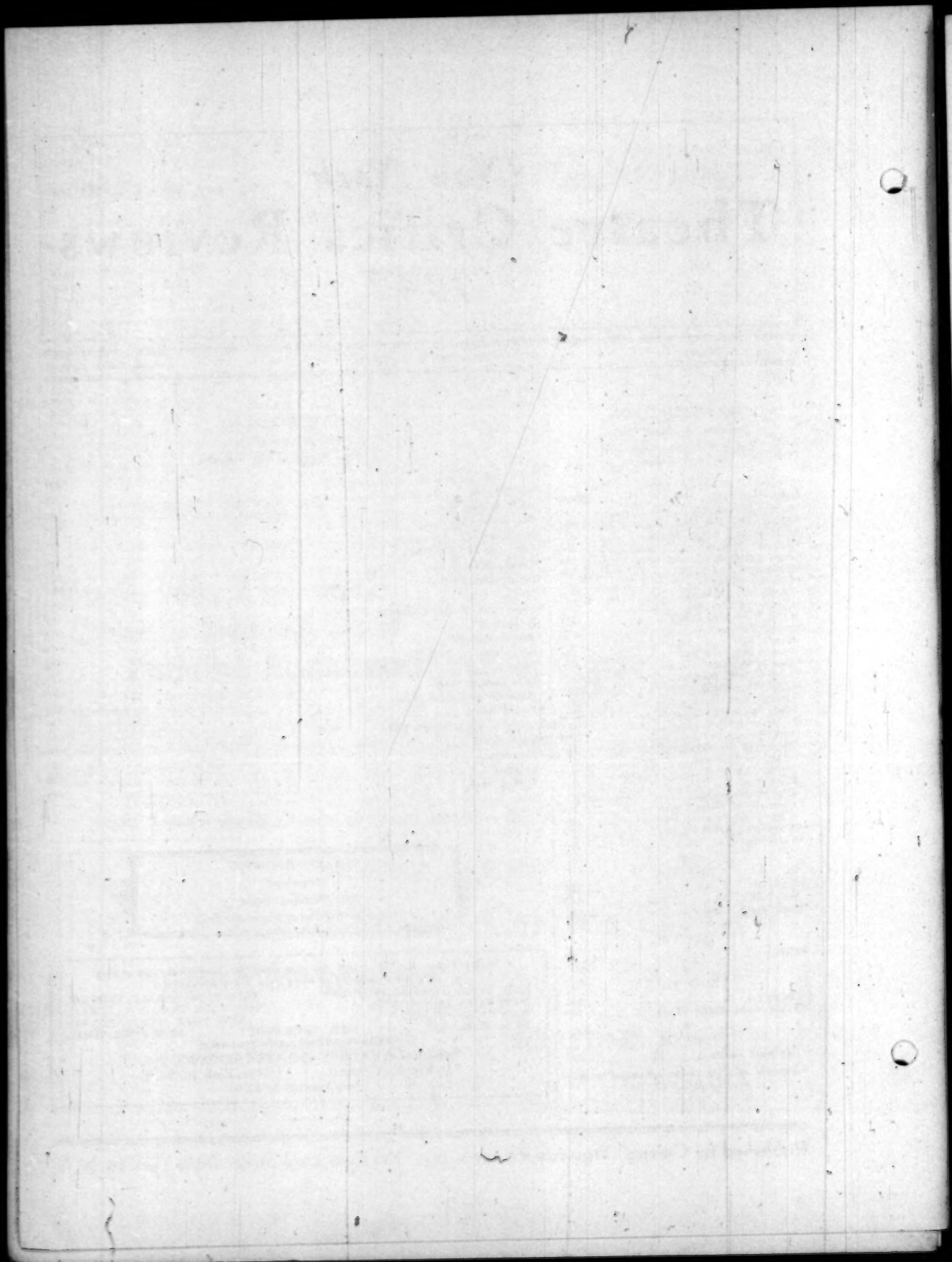
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"Brigadoon"

The New York Times

MARCH 14, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

To the growing list of major achievements on the musical stage add one more—"Brigadoon," put on at the Ziegfeld last evening. For once the modest label "musical play" has a precise meaning. For it is impossible to say where the music and dancing leave off and the story begins in this beautifully orchestrated Scotch idyll. Under Bob Lewis' direction all the arts of the theatre have been woven into a singing pattern of enchantment.

According to the book by Alan Jay Lerner, two American boys on a holiday stumble into a quaint Scottish village called Brigadoon on the morning of a fair and on the day of a wedding. Although Brigadoon seems pleasant and hospitable it also seems like a strange anachronism; and finally the local dominie tells them why. Brigadoon is a spectral village that comes to life one day every century; and while the rest of the world wears itself out, the villagers of Brigadoon live on from century to cen-

tury in neighborly enjoyment and in a remote corner of time.

In less imaginative hands this fable might yield nothing more than entertainment for guffawing. But the fathers of "Brigadoon" are spreading the sorcery of their village into a plastic work of art that carries dialogue into dancing and dancing into music with none of the practical compromises of the Broadway stage. There are two or three good Broadway songs in Frederick Loewe's score. "Almost Like Being in Love," sung rapturously by David Brooks and Marion Bell, is an able swing number; and "There But For You Go I," sung by Mr. Brooks, is good Broadway romance.

But most of the score, which lays the emphasis on string instruments, has a traditional background of bag-pipe skirling and a melodic air. "Waitin' for My Dearie" is a lyrical romance and "I'll Go Home With Bonnie Jean" is a village festival number. Mr. Loewe has also written some lively airs for country dancing, like those for the wedding dance and the sword dance.

This is where Agnes de Mille comes in. For a kind of idyllic rhythm flows through the whole pattern of the production, and Miss de Mille has dipped again into the Pandora's box where she keeps her

dance designs. Some of the dances are merely illustrations for the music. One or two of them are conventional, if lovely, maiden round dances. But some of them, like the desperate chase in the forest, are fiercely dramatic. The funeral dance to the dour tune of bag-pipes brings the footstep of doom into the forest. And the sword dance, done magnificently by James Mitchell, is tremendously exciting with its stylization of primitive ideas.

Oliver Smith's settings in low colors are commonplace and convey little of the magic common to the rest of the production. With a fresh locale to work in, David Ffolkes has designed some spirited Scotch costumes, which is probably no more than an exercise in autobiography for him. The cast has been chosen with the same taste that prevails throughout the performance. Pamela Britton for the impudence, Virginia Bosler for the innocent bride, Lee Sullivan for the tenor songs, Lidija Franklin for the solo dances, William Hansen for the village elder, George Keane for the ironic Yankee—these are the actors with the most conspicuous parts.

But it undermines the motive of "Brigadoon" to pick and choose among the performers. For this excursion into an imagined Scottish village is an orchestration of the theatre's myriad arts, like a singing story-book for an idealized

"BRIGADOON"

Musical play, with book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner; music by Frederick Loewe; production staged by Robert Lewis; dance and musical numbers by Agnes de Mille; scenery designed by Oliver Smith; costumes by David Ffolkes; musical director, Frank Allers; orchestrations by Ted Royal; lighting by Peggy Clarke; vocal arrangements by Loewe; presented by Cheryl Crawford at the Ziegfeld Theatre Thursday evening, March 13, 1947.

The cast:
Tommy Albright..... David Brooks
Jeff Douglas..... George Keane
Archie Beaton..... Elliott Sullivan
Harry Beaton..... James Mitchell
Fishmonger..... Buntz Keller
Angus MacGuffin..... Walter Scheff
Randy Dean..... Harry Gordon
Andrew MacLaren..... Edward Gullen
Fiona MacLaren..... Virginia Bosler
Jean MacLaren..... Pamela Britton
Meg Brockie..... Lidija Franklin
Charlie Dalrymple..... Lee Sullivan
Mr. Lundie..... William Hansen
Reverend Duncanson..... George Drake
Frank..... John Paul
John Ashton..... Francis Charles
Bagpipes..... James MacVadden and Arthur Horn
Stuart Dalrymple..... Paul Anderson
MacGregor..... Earl Redding

SYNOPSIS: Act I. Scene 1. A forest in the Scottish Highlands, about five on a May morning. Scene 2. A road in Brigadoon (then the village square—MacCannochy Square—later the same morning. Scene 3. An open shed, about noon. Scene 4. The MacLaren house, mid-afternoon. Scene 5. Outside the house of Mr. Lundie. Scene 6. The churchyard, dusk. Act II. Scene 1. A forest inside Brigadoon, later at night. Scene 2. A road in Brigadoon. Scene 3. The glen, immediately after. Scene 4. A bar in New York City, four months later. Scene 5. The forest—same as Scene 1 of Act I—three days later.

country fair long ago.

DAILY NEWS

MARCH 14, 1947

Songs, Story and Singers Make 'Brigadoon' a Beguiling Fantasy

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"Brigadoon," with book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner and score by Frederick Loewe, is an enchanting musical about an enchanted village—a work of imagination and beauty. Now and again it dawdles, particularly in the second act, but this is a minor error which can be corrected with some hardboiled editing. It is a brand new delight for hungry theatregoers.

Brigadoon is not on any maps, but nevertheless it is a village in Scotland upon which a pair of young American hunters stumble by chance. It is the merest of chances, for Brigadoon and all the people in it come into existence only once, just for the day, every 100 years.

It is 1947 to Tommy Albright Jeff Douglas, the Americans; but to such amiable Highlanders as Fiona MacLaren, Meg Brockie, Charlie Dalrymple and the benign schoolmaster, Mr. Lundie, it is the year 1747. A miracle was laid upon Brigadoon at the prayer of the

village minister—a prayer that the community be saved from wicked witches. The best way to save it, the minister and Mr. Lundie agreed, was to let it exist only one day in a century—not time enough for the troubles of any century to touch it.

Newcomer Makes Hit

This is a nice fancy—and Producer Cheryl Crawford has fitted it out handsomely. The work of Mr. Loewe and Mr. Lerner is exceptionally good, and there are so many lovely songs I cannot tell you about them all right now. Numbers like "Waitin' for My Dearie," "The Heather on the Hill" and "Come to Me, Bend to Me" are captivating, and captivatingly sung.

Those who carry the light burden of the melodies include David

Brooks in the role of a lad who finds a girl to love in another century—as once did Leslie Howard in "Berkeley Square"; Marion Bell as the girl—an utterly welcome newcomer from California, and Lee Sullivan, as a Highland swain who sings like an Irish tenor. I hope often to hear Miss Bell waitin' for her dearie or Mr. Sullivan trying to beguile a girl with "Come to Me."

For the moments of laughter there are Pamela Britton as an Eighteenth Century version of Ado Annie, the girl who can't say no, in "Oklahoma," and George Keane as Mr. Brooks' fellow American. Mr. Keane has a nice way of getting off some amusing lines. When a villager asks him if Russia is in Europe he says, "More and more. You just cross the Channel and turn left."

Magic by Oliver Smith

The settings are by Oliver Smith—just the man to build the village

and outskirts of Brigadoon, he being quite a magician. David Ffolkes' Scottish costumes are admirable, and under the direction of Robert Lewis the actors all play naturally and charmingly.

Some of the highlights of this new offering at the Ziegfeld Theatre are the dances by Agnes de Mille, but, if I am going to be a hardboiled editor, I must opine that there may be one too many of them and that another runs too long. Just when I get pleasantly steamed up about the love of Mr. Brooks and Miss Bell, I don't want to be cooled off by watching a herd of gazelles from Chorus Equity running around as though Agnes herself were after them.

Best of the dances is the first one—a seductive and colorful affair excellently performed by Lidija Franklin, James Mitchell and a group. Mr. Mitchell, who also does a good job of acting, does an impressive sword dance later on. I was sorry to see him get killed and I don't think they need to have his funeral on the stage, even though they do have bagpipes to play the dirge.

These objections of mine are for the record, and are comparatively unimportant in view of the many fine things in "Brigadoon." And thanks are due to whoever found William Hansen for the role of Mr. Lundie, the schoolmaster. Mr. Hansen is irresistibly able to persuade you that if there isn't a village named Brigadoon, there ought to be.

"Brigadoon"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

MARCH 14, 1947

By **HOWARD BARNES**

Drink a Cup to Brigadoon

A MUSICAL fantasy of rare delight and distinction has opened at the Ziegfeld Theatre. "Brigadoon" is a jubilant and brilliantly integrated show. Alan Jay Lerner's yarn about a couple of Americans in a hexed Scottish village is captivating, without being too fey. The music by Frederick Loewe is always a felicitous accompaniment to the action and Agnes de Mille has taken advantage of it to create a series of entrancing dance numbers. An excellent company flings kilts and

rolls its r's with disarming enthusiasm and the physical production is the sort to remind one of the theater's vast fund of magical illusion. This Cheryl Crawford offering is a bonny thing for Broadway.

The story is slight, but vastly absorbing, as the strolling Yankees find themselves in a town which only comes to life every hundred years for a day. Lerner has had the grace not to labor his conceit. It merely serves for a beguiling variety of song and dance routines. There is not a great deal of outright comedy in the proceedings, but that is just as well in so delicate a framework. What matters is that the Loewe songs are many and melodious; that they are sung and danced with dramatic as well as spectacular effect and that the whole work has been timed to hold one's

mounting attention through some dozen scenes.

It is the meticulous collaboration of a large number of craftsmen which makes "Brigadoon" triumphant. David Brooks and Marion Bell have what might be called the leading roles, as the 1947 New Yorker and the 1747 Scotch lassie, but they never try to take over the stage to the eclipse of their colleagues. They sing and act with equal assurance and clarity, giving "Almost Like Being in Love" or "From This Day On" a gracious interpretation which is certain to make them big hits. George Keane contributes bits of wry humor as the Yank's pal, while Pamela Britton, Lee Sullivan, William Hansen and James Mitchell add to the general gaiety whenever they are called upon.

The dancing is probably the key to the compelling quality of the entertainment. Miss de Mille has rarely been more inspired than she has in such numbers as "Till Go Home With Bonnie Jean," "Come to Me, Bend to Me," or a melancholy funeral dance, accompanied by real bagpipes. Lidija Franklin creates patterns of great beauty in the ensembles, but the whole chorus demands the highest praise. Oliver Smith has designed simple and effective sets which take one into the Sleepy Hollow of the Highlands or a New York bar with a minimum of discomfort and David Ffolkes has gone to town with tartans in his costumes. Robert Lewis is responsible for the over-all staging. To him an extra grateful nod for a scintillating song and dance fantasy, that has given theater-goers reason to toss tamoshaners in air.

New York Post

MARCH 14, 1947

New Musical Fantasy Has Fine Imagination

By **RICHARD WATTS JR.**

In a season of Gaelic musical fantasies, "Brigadoon," which opened stylishly at the Ziegfeld Theatre last night, may be roughly described as the Scots reply to the Irish "Finian's Rainbow." You are promised no further comparison between them in this space, however. To get right down to business, the new offering is a brilliant and beautiful show, with imagination, taste and distinction. I have seen other musical comedies that I enjoyed more, but few for which I have a deeper admiration.

It is the imagination which has

gone into the making of "Brigadoon" that first attracts attention. In part, it is the imaginative conception of the book, which deals with the adventures of two young Americans in a mystic village in the Scottish Highlands, where the inhabitants return to earth for one day every hundred years. The imagination extends beyond that, though. It extends, for one thing, to the treatment of the fable, which is sensitive, gracefully emotional and romantically effective in literate and intelligent fashion.

It extends, likewise, to the details of the production. Let us take the dance numbers, concerning which this reviewer is frequently not too friendly. There had been rumors that Agnes de Mille, whose ballets for "Oklahoma!" are now historic, was losing her touch, but these tales can be vigorously denied. For "Brigadoon" she has staged ballets that are simple, dramatic,

colorful and exciting, and this ballet skeptic salutes her humbly.

The show's fine quality of imagination is to be found in Oliver Smith's beautifully atmospheric sets, in David Ffolkes' handsome costumes, in the tasteful direction of Robert Lewis and in the songs by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Where it comes in chiefly, though, is in the skill and understanding with which all the elements of writing, acting and production were combined to provide a mood and quality which, in a manner never blatant or gaudy, succeeds in being graceful, sensitive and rather moving.

In "The Day Before Spring" last season the Messrs. Lerner and Loewe demonstrated that they had ideas and the ability to write engaging scores. My impression on first hearing is that the songs for "Brigadoon" are attractive but slightly less immediately winning than those in the

previous work. If my first emotion last night was admiration rather than sheer enjoyment it was because the proceedings seemed to me more marked by taste and style than by emotional warmth in book and music, but there is no denying that the authors have matured as theatrical craftsmen.

As the American hero, David Brooks demonstrates that, in both singing and acting, he is one of the most valuable young leading men in the theatre. George Keane is amusing as his ironical friend, the sort of character Tom Helmore played so brilliantly in "The Day Before Spring," and Lee Sullivan is engaging as a romantic villager. Marion Bell is emotionally appealing as the heroine, Pamela Britton is entertaining as an amorous village girl, and William Hansen manages the vitally important scene about the legend of Brigadoon excellently. The town has another musical hit of large proportions.

Daily Mirror

MARCH 14, 1947

'Brigadoon' Is Gay Musical Fantasy

By **ROBERT COLEMAN**

Charming is the word for "Brigadoon," the bonnie hieland musical fantasy, which wee lassie Cheryl Crawford presented in wee mon Billy Rose's handsome Ziegfeld Theatre last evening before a top hat and ermine wrap audience.

It took courage to produce "Brigadoon," an unconventional show of marked originality. But in this instance, courage will be richly rewarded. Compromising less than "Finian's Rainbow" with Broadway and Tin Pan Alley, born of the imagination that went into "Dark of the Moon,"

as artistic as a modern dance recital or a folk song fest, it still manages to pack a tartan full of popular appeal.

While trekking through Scotland, a couple of sophisticated American lads look down into a valley and, as a heavy fog lifts, discover a village not on the map. Brigadoon is not on the map, because, due to the efforts of a con-

scientious minister to keep sin away from its door, it miraculously appears but one day in every hundred years.

The lads witness a wedding and a tragic funeral that follows, they sample Scotch romance and the simple life. Then given the opportunity to leave before Brigadoon vanishes again into the mists, they flee back to New York's cafe society. But the spell of Brigadoon is on them and soon they return to Scotland, hoping to see it materialize once more.

Doubtless having read in school that the Scots are a dour people, librettist Alan Jay Lerner has made the eerie inhabitants of Brigadoon a humorless lot. All of his choicest comedy lines fall to the lot of a flip American, Jeff Douglas.

Producer Crawford has discovered in George Keane the perfect type to impersonate Douglas. Having cut his theatrical teeth on Shakespeare in the Maurice Shvane company, the versatile Keane proves himself one of the

most ingratiating comedians to enliven a musical in the past few seasons.

To dance, sing and act out the joys and sorrows of Brigadoon Miss Crawford also has engaged such charming young people as David Brooks, Lee Sullivan, Marion Bell, Pamela Britton, James Mitchell, Lidija Franklin and Virginia Bosler. And there is the veteran William Hansen admirably cast as the kindly village schoolmaster.

Salutes also are due the staging by Robert Lewis, the choreography by Agnes de Mille, the sets by Oliver Smith and the costumes by David Ffolkes.

"Brigadoon" promises to be an amazing hit. It will take a clever magician to get you a ticket in the immediate future. Dozens of theatre parties have been booked by charm seekers. And the advance sale has passed the \$400,000 mark. A fantastic figure even for a super fantasy. Just the thing to make a thrifty Scotchman's eyes pop out from under his tam o' shanter.

The Sun

MARCH 14, 1947

'Brigadoon,' an Enormous Hit at Ziegfeld, Best Musical Play of the Season.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The Scots took over the Ziegfeld Theater last night and they'll be there a year, or two years, or just forever. Cheryl Crawford, breaking away from the headaches of repertoire, gives the town a stunning show, a beautiful and enticing show, in the musical fantasy that is called "Brigadoon."

"Brigadoon" has color and charm, enough for a dozen productions, and it is played by a fine company. It has whimsy, beguiling music, exciting dancing—the most imaginative numbers Agnes de Mille has given us since "Oklahoma." And it has a book. That is news!

Just so that there can be no misinterpretation of my reactions to last night's proceedings in the

Avenue of the Americas, let it be hereby recorded that "Brigadoon" is by far the best musical play the season has produced, and it is certainly one of the best within my entire play-going experience. And that's considerable.

Alan Jay Lerner is a librettist and lyricist who knows his job. In "Brigadoon" he has spun a charming fable of two Americans—two brisk young New Yorkers, in fact—who, in their wanderings

about the Scottish heather, literally stumble upon the village of Brigadoon, a place that awakens for only one day in every hundred years. The less realistic of the visitors falls in love with the village beauty, leaves her, but returns, knowing that he is to stay in Brigadoon for century upon century. Fiona MacLaren had cast her spell upon him. As played by the raven-haired Marion Bell, making a spectacular Broadway debut, she also cast a spell upon the first audience at the Ziegfeld. Miss Bell can sing Frederick Loewe's lovely songs—such songs as "Waitin' for My Dearie" and "The Heather on the Hill"—and she can also act. "Brigadoon" has the right players.

Lerner's Scottish folk tale, blending realism with fantasy, is told to Loewe's exhilarating music, to the vital dance patterns of Miss deMille, to the competent staging of Robert Lewis, to the skirl of bagpipes and to the splashing of color all over the place. Oliver Smith's striking backgrounds and the marvelous costumes turned in by David

Folkles bring the Highlands and the heather to the Ziegfeld's ample stage.

The company couldn't be better. David Brooks, who was so good in "Bloomer Girl," is direct and likeable as the impressionable American who finds a bonnie lassie and who cannot live without her. George Keane is excellent as his cynical friend, Pamela Britton, having had her training in "Oklahoma," is a sprightly comedienne. Lidija Franklin is a fine ballerina. William Hansen gives real characterization to Mr. Lundie, who knows the strange story of Brigadoon and is permitted to tell it. There are words of vast approval, too, for Lee Sullivan, James Mitchell, Virginia Bosler, Roland Guerdar and George Drake.

In a word, "Brigadoon" is an enormous hit. In a few more words, it is all that it was supposed to be, and considerably more. It demonstrates what our theater can really do with a musical play when it sets its mind to it—and when it goes to Scotland for a locale.

Aye, mon, "Brigadoon" is a grand show.

Journal American

MARCH 14, 1947

'Brigadoon' Opens At Ziegfeld Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

Believe me, "Brigadoon" has everything. A fine fantastic story by Alan Jay Lerner. Lyrics by Mr. Lerner which are altogether worthy. A fresh melodious score by Frederick Loewe. Orchestral arrangements by Ted Royal which accent its every beauty. Ardent and appropriate dances by an Agnes de Mille who has outdone herself in Cheryl Crawford's admirable enchantment.

This is not all, again believe me. There are skilful direction by Robert Lewis, imaginative scenery by Oliver Smith, brilliant lighting by Peggy Clark, colorful costumes by David Folkles and a music-minded orchestra under Frans Allers to complete the glowing portrait of a song-and-dance show replete with romance, beauty, originality, excitement and distinction.

Which, I hope, is as good a way as any to begin another rave review, a rave review of the

"new musical play" Miss Crawford installed last night in Billy Rose's becoming Ziegfeld Theatre on the Avenue of the Americas. No lush and lyric showpiece has deserved such fulsome praise since "Annie Get Your Gun," with its Ethel Merman, and "Finian's Rainbow," without its propaganda.

With Eva Le Gallienne back home in Westport, Margaret Webster off on a lecture tour and Cheryl Crawford bringing "Brigadoon" to Broadway, the joint mismanagement of their American Repertory Theatre is practically forgiven.

Victim of a Miracle

Founded obliquely on an old Teutonic legend, "Brigadoon" tells how the Scottish village which gives the piece its name became the vertiginous victim of a miracle. Two hundred years ago came St. Houdini's Day, the

town and all its townsmen were urged to disappear. And disappear they did, with permission to return—as good as new, and relaxed and rested—once every hundred years.

When, at the Ziegfeld, the traveler curtains part and the musical play gets good and going, Tommy Albright and Jeff Douglas are lost in a forest in the Scottish Highlands. There, the village of Brigadoon is on the verge of its once-a-century comeback. They, good Americans who believe what they are told to, are caught up in the Caledonian municipal resurrection. Especially Tommy!

So, as the songs go on to say, Fiona MacLaren is down in MacConnachy Square, waitin' for her dearie. Her dearie comes along in the person of Tommy Albright and claims her for his own among the heather on the hill. From this day on, it is almost like being in love, with Mr. Albright oh, so charming and American, and Miss MacLaren oh, so susceptible and Scotch.

There is a sub-plot, too, dealing with Jeff Douglas and his dearie, a go-getting lassie whose name is Meg Brockie and who knows what she wants when she sees it. What she wants is Laddie Jeff and she gets him temporarily.

Felicitous Affair

In the course of the plot's unfolding, the groundwork of which is

assigned successfully to William Hansen, there are the liting words and music, the delightful dances and direction, the imaginative lighting and scenery which, when combined as felicitously as they are in "Brigadoon," provide the romance, beauty, originality, excitement and distinction applauded ardently by last night's audience.

David Brooks is an able and attractive leading laddie, just as he was in "Bloomer Girl," on Broadway, and "Shooting Star," out of town. George Keane is his funny-fellow without the curse of mugging. Marion Bell is a lovely leading lassie. Pamela Britton escaped from both M. G. M. and Frank Sinatra in time to be tough as a Scottish temptress, and rough as a singer of raffish songs.

The cast is really wonderful.

Among the most wonderful of all are the dancers directed by Agnes de Mille. I wish George Balanchine would come on over from the Century and learn how to create choreography for a Broadway song-and-dance show. If "Brigadoon" should ever need a star, it could make use of Miss de Mille's dances. They're not only in the show, but of it.

Yes, "Brigadoon" has everything, including my theatre-going love and admiration. A brand new, grand new musical play, be sure to add it to your list of "must-sees." If this be a rave review, then make the most of it!

"Brigadoon"—continued



New York World-Telegram

MARCH 14, 1947

'Brigadoon' Enchants The First-Nighters

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Brigadoon" is absolute enchantment.

The new musical is tender and exciting, fantastic and real, stirring and soothing. It is a world of its own, tempting a fracture of the commandment against coveting.

After the hero has lived a few hours in the legendary town where every tomorrow is a 100 years away, you begin to wish you had found it yourself. The fortunate lad is Tommy, who gets lost in the Scottish Highlands on the day that Brigadoon miraculously awakens for the first time in a century.

A Lovely Lassie.

He finds a lovely lassie, and they fall in love as they help plan her sister's wedding. A broken-hearted swain decides to run away, but if he or any villager leaves, the town will disappear forever. The people hunt him down and he is killed.

Tommy's pal, Jeff, confesses having unwittingly caused the boy's death. The shock of ugly reality makes Tommy doubt and fear the place. Away from Brigadoon, he finds the girl dominating every thought. Drawn back to the Highlands he discovers

that his belief in her has awakened Brigadoon for good.

This modern legend is told with convincing emotion, logic and wit. The appealing fresh music blends a momentum of its own into the plot, and the dances live with exquisite variety in the Scottish idiom. The scenic effects mist up a fascinating aura of fantasy.

A Perfect Cast.

Cheryl Crawford has assembled a cast that is right to a man. There is not an inadequate nor a forced performance in the show, and this is remarkable for so few of the actors are well known. "Brigadoon" should mark a turning tide for a number of youthful careers.

Puck-faced David Brooks plays the earnest hero winningly and uses his fine voice with tasteful restraint. Marion Bell as the heroine achieves a dimensional character who is determined, yet yielding, and earthy, but distant. She has a soaring clear soprano that easily projects the melodies.

Famela Britton is an uninhibited milkmaid who believes in love for love's sake. She delivers a couple of deft lyrics about her amatory inheritance with real aplomb. As the object of her affections, George Keane plays Tommy's pal, Jeff, in a telling comic manner.

Brilliant Pantomime.

James Mitchell does a brilliant

job of pantomiming in dance the surly lover who tries to run away. His Scottish ceremonial dances have a knife-like precision, and his flight has the passion of a hunted animal.

The engaging Lee Sullivan lends a ringing tenor to the role of the groom.

Frederick Loewe has been ingenious with his tunes. They are permeated with Scottish flavor, yet they avoid bagpipe scales and fife rhythms except where specifically demanded. Alan Jay Lerner writes a book here with strength and sentiment and a nice pinch of cutting humor.

The costumes of David Ffolkes continue the show's balance between native consistency and liberal design. He uses plaids freely without letting the pattern become monotonous.

Uproarious Applause.

Robert Lewis has directed the work so it flows with intense interest, broken last night only by the many moments when the audience held up proceedings with uproarious applause.

"Brigadoon" has virtues of "The Student Prince," "Berkely Square" and "Carousel;" and, with all that, it is as fresh as a budding thistle. The title might well serve as a common noun meaning a way to forget your cares, or get out of this world and dream a while.



MARCH 16, 1947

Kronenberger

A Fine Musical Fantasy On a Scottish Theme

A title so attractive as *Brigadoon* is something to live up to; but *Brigadoon* lives up to it. And the musical fantasy at the Ziegfeld not only has charm; it shows a good deal of independence. It calls its own tune; in the very act of making Broadway seem brighter, it makes it seem a touch less Broadwayish. It is true that I was fingering larger adjectives at the end of the first act than I was at the end of the show—for after a time *Brigadoon* loses some of its lure, and at the last it flops down to a banal Broadway level. But all in all it is a very engaging evening.

Brigadoon is so successful be-

cause it has hit on a very pleasant fantasy for a musical, and then known what to do with it. To be sure, *Brigadoon* is imaginative at the Barrie level, not the Blake, it is wistful and whimsical, sentimental and faraway. But Mr. Lerner's tale of two young Americans who stumble on a vanished Scottish village that comes miraculously to life for one day every 100 years is thoroughly appealing on its own terms. *Brigadoon* has realized, moreover, that its charm must lie less in any story it tells than in the general mood it creates; and it has created that mood by fusing a number of theater elements as densely as possible. The music, dancing, scenery and costumes sur-

round the story rather than merely set it off. In fact, *Brigadoon* is most alluring when these things really are the story—when we are given the look and feel of 18th-century Brigadoon, its customs and ceremonials, the details of a wedding, a funeral, a fair. There is a romantic love story, of course; but it is Brigadoon itself that is really romantic.

In staging *Brigadoon*, Robert Lewis has fused its various elements with authority and spirit; and each separate element is pleasant or better. Musically, Mr. Loewe's score has no particular distinction, but it maintains a rather charming mood without becoming monotonous, and it offers some likeable sentimental tunes. Agnes de Mille's dances, if a little trademarked, are particularly clean-cut and animated; the best of them, perhaps, being a sword dance that has great style. Oliver Smith's sets are nicely evocative, and David Ffolkes' costumes quite handsome.

The cast, too, is an attractive one. I especially liked Marion Bell, who plays the heroine, and William Hanse, the old Brigadoon schoolmaster. David Brooks' voice is as good as ever, and James Mitchell's dancing is excellent; while Virginia Bosler, Lee Sullivan, Pamela Britton and others come off well, too.

Mr. Lerner's book and lyrics are further pleasant items; in fact, *Brigadoon* shows so much desire (as *Finian's Rainbow* didn't) to make Broadway keep its distance, to avoid shoddiness, to hold to a superior and stylish level—and so generally succeeds—that one feels a little cranky even mentioning its weak points. The second act does, however, let the mood partly dissolve and the charm rather peter out; and the last two scenes are an outright blunder. Whether *Brigadoon* was to have a bittersweet ending or a happy one was of very little moment, but it should not have slapped one ending on top of the other—and in the corniest Broadway fashion. As for the final ending, even in fantasy one good miracle doesn't deserve another. Even worse, shows like *Brigadoon* should run like hell from those gauze-curtain visions of one's lost love standing forlornly on a hill top.

But even that can be forgiven in what is so obviously the season's freshest musical.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"The Chocolate Soldier"

Journal  American

MARCH 13, 1947

'Chocolate Soldier' In Fifth Revival

By ROBERT GARLAND

It's a good trick, if you can do it. Making a revival look like new. Jack Del Bondio and Hans Bartsch, representing the Delvan Company, have done it at the Century Theatre. They've revived "The Chocolate Soldier," turning the clock back almost 40 years.

They've turned the clock back to the night of Sept. 13, 1909. Then, at the Lyric Theatre on Manhattan's 42nd st., F. C. Whitney presented the Oscar Straus operetta for the first time in this city, following the technical American premiere in Philadelphia.

Last night Messrs. Del Bondio and Bartsch revived "The Chocolate Soldier" with many a mention of Oscar Straus' original music and no mention at all of Bernard Shaw's original contribution. Everybody gets credit on the program. Everybody but the author of "Arms and the Man."

Standing a bit unsteadily in

his upper right stage box, receiving the applause and returning the bows he rightfully deserved, I was wondering if Mr. Straus himself was giving thought to the absent Mr. Shaw, who, after all, is said and sung, was fundamentally responsible.

Shaw's Dialog Used

As it stands at the Century, "The Chocolate Soldier" is blessed with a book by Guy Bolton, based in the American version by Stanislaus Stange, based on the German version by Rudolph Bernauer and Leopold Jacobson, based, let me add, on Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man."

Apart from a change in character names for singing purposes, "The Chocolate Soldier" follows "Arms and the Man" not too unfaithfully. Although Bernard Shaw's credit line cannot be found in the Century's program, much of Bernard Shaw's dialogue

can be heard on the Century's stage.

It's good dialogue, too, telling of Bulgaria and Serbia at war, of the sweet-toothed Lt. Bumeril who runs away and lives to love another day in Nadina Popoff's bedroom. Nadina is betrothed to Alexis. And there you have the old three-act story.

All this, with comic complications, satirical undercurrents, and implied implications, is ideal opera comique material. So, when set to Oscar Straus' entrancing melodies and projected with proper skill and understanding, the result is irresistible.

Good as Original

It still is. In this, its fifth New York revival—I remember Donald Brian and Tessa Kosta, Charles Purcell and Alice Mackenzie; Mr. Purcell and Bernice Claire; Allan Jones and Helen Gleason—"The Chocolate Soldier" is as good as the memorable original.

Where, in that first showing, Lt. Bumeril was Jack Gardner and Nadina Popoff was Ida Brooks Hunt, now, in this fifth resurrection, Lt. Bumeril is Keith Andes and Nadina Popoff is Frances McCann. Both approach perfection; each is fresh, young and well equipped for singing-acting.

Billy Gilbert, at home on screen, air and stage, is a fat and funny Popoff who, in a lengthy lyric, claims to be what he refers to as a connoisseur.

"THE CHOCOLATE SOLDIER."

Operetta, with music by Oscar Straus; book by Rudolph Bernauer and Leopold Jacobson; American version by Stanislaus Stange; staged by Felix Brentano; revised book by Guy Bolton; revised and additional lyrics by Bernard Hanighen; settings and lighting by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Lucinda Ballard; choreography by George Balanchine; orchestration and musical direction by Jay Blackton; presented by J. H. De Bondio and Hans Bartsch at the Century Theatre Wednesday evening, March 12, 1947. The cast:

Nadina	Frances McCann
Mascha	Gloria Hamilton
Aurelia	Muriel O'Malley
Bumeril	Keith Andes
Massakroff	Henry Calvin
Popoff	Billy Gilbert
Alexis	Ernest McChesney
Stefan (a servant)	Michael Mann
Katrina (a servant)	Anna Wiman
Premiere Dancer	Mary Ellen Moylan
Premiere Dancer	Francisco Moncion

SYNOPSIS—Act I. Place: Nadina's bedroom in Popoff's house, situated in a small town in Bulgaria. Time: Autumn, last century. Act II. Place: The courtyard of the Popoff house. Time: An afternoon in spring. A year later. Act III. Place: The same. That evening.

Henry Calvin is a meritorious Massakroff. The others are truly Oscar Straussian. Small wonder he applauded them.

There's a couple of George Balanchine ballets which have little to do with the proceedings; an interpolated song called "After Today," which has fine sets and costumes by Jo Mielziner and Lucinda Ballard; an excellent orchestra under Jay Blackton and an over-all enthusiasm that is contagious...

DAILY NEWS

MARCH 13, 1947

Oscar Straus' 'Chocolate Soldier' In a Bright and Youthful Revival

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Some attractive and spirited young people and a couple who are not so young but who know the comic opera business began working at the Century Theatre last evening in a breezy revival of Oscar Straus' "The Chocolate Soldier."

This operetta is considerably more sound than, may I say, some of the works of Victor Herbert's collaborators, for it has a good book based on a good play—Shaw's "Arms and the Man." No less sturdy is the score, with such beguiling waltz melodies as "My Hero" and "Sympathy" and such gay bits as "Thank the Lord the War is Over" and the letter song. Producers J. H. del Bondio and Hans Bartsch have done a nice job

of brightening up an old-style musical; they have lightened it but they have not monkeyed with it too much. It is gracefully and not overpoweringly set by Jo Mielziner; Lucinda Ballard's costumes are brightly Bulgarian and the dancing girls are young and pretty.

Ex-Soldier's Debut

Keith Andes, an ex-G.I., is making a very amiable Broadway debut in

the title role. His voice is good enough and his manner is disarming; his Chocolate Soldier is not as unctuous as I remember Donald Brian's to have been, and this is all right with me.

Frances McCann makes an attractive Nadina, and another Broadway newcomer, a pert lass named Gloria Hamilton, is an amusing Mascha. The comedy is entrusted to Billy Gilbert as Popoff and Muriel O'Malley as Mrs. Popoff—and it is in excellent hands. Gilbert's mugging, his bouncing lower bosom and his sneezing attacks are perfectly in order for this style of musical, and Miss O'Malley is an excellent comedienne.

Revised Lyrics.

This isn't the first time that "The Chocolate Soldier" has been fixed up. Stanislaus Stange did the first English version. A few years ago Guy Bolton revised it. And now young Bernard Hanighen has brushed up the lyrics quite expertly, making them sound fairly modern but not outrageously up-to-date. Hanighen has interpolated a comedy number for Mr. Gilbert which serves its purpose.

Also interpolated, for some of George Balanchine's dance numbers, is some Oscar Straus music from other scores. This must be all right with Mr. Straus, because he was in a box last night and took a bow at the end of the performance, looking pleased and touched.

At this date in the century I don't think "The Chocolate Soldier" will knock you over, exactly—but all the same it is an ingratiating show with some grand tunes, and I like the spirit with which it has been directed by Felix Brentano.

"The Chocolate Soldier"—continued

Daily Mirror

MARCH 13, 1947

'Chocolate Soldier' A Hit Once Again

By ROBERT COLEMAN

With composer Oscar Straus sitting proudly in a stage box, J. H. Del Bondio and Hans Bartsch presented their revival of "The Chocolate Soldier" to an appreciative first night audience at the Century Theatre last evening.

Straus has written several new songs for the score and Guy Bolton has revamped the libretto, inserting some knockabout comedy material for the use of Billy Gilbert. Jo Mielziner and Lucinda Ballard have devised easy-on-the-eye costumes.

Director Felix Brentano has directed the book with a none too light hand, but has paced it

speedily and eliminated lulls. Using players who have had little schooling in the light-opera tradition, he has done a workmanlike job.

Gilbert is a comic trained in the robust Hollywood slapstick factories. As Popoff, he splutters, stews and roars many of his lines. But the first nighters found his method effective, laughed up

roariously and applauded lustily.

As the Nadina, who shelters the Swiss soldier, Bumerli, who has fondness for sweets, Frances McCann is an orb tonic. Her voice has improved noticeably since she was seen here in "The Vagabond King," her acting is more polished and sprightly. The film scouts doubtless will be around in the next couple of days with contracts.

Keith Andes, ex-GI who just completed a picture on the Coast, is a good looking Bumerli. He has a he-man voice and reminds us a little of Alfred Drake.

Other roles are in the capable hands of Gloria Hamilton, Ernest McChesney, Muriel O'Malley and Henry Calvin.

George Balanchine's choreography is pleasant if undistinguished. Mary Ellen, one of our more promising young ballerinas, was somewhat of a disappointment last evening. Her adagio lift beats were shoddy, she traveled several feet reeling off a few fouettes and her leaps were

unexciting. Francisco Moncion gave her so-so support. About the neatest dancing we saw on stage was contributed by blonde Barbara Heath, of the corps de ballet.

We think "The Chocolate Soldier" will be a much improved show after the cast has gotten over its opening night jitters and developed a more uniform style of playing.

But as it stood last evening, it was well worth seeing and hearing. If we were a young composer we would pay it many visits and study the Straus score. The Waltz Kings like Straus really composed scores, not just a couple of juke box tunes and plenty of filler.

The first nighters had a dandy time. Star Francine Larrimore, sitting just behind us, laughed and applauded generously, and her escort howled over Gilbert's comedy antics.

Your drama reporter devoted much of his attention to the beautiful Miss McCann. And, brother, she is a beauty!



MARCH 14, 1947

Kronenberger

The Tunes Are Fine, But The Rest Lacks Flavor

PM Reviews

As currently revived, *The Chocolate Soldier* is justified by its music, but by its music alone. After 38 years, the score remains fresh, jolly and melodious; and it gets a fair hearing. If it has dated a bit, in the pleasant way that period music probably should, it has aged hardly at all. Nor, except for *My Hero*, is it relentlessly familiar; and in *My Hero's* case, familiarity does not breed contempt.

Otherwise, the present production is a good deal more disappointing than it had any need to be—for even the book (as operetta books go) has its points. No doubt it is only fair to say that by existing operetta standards the proceedings at the Century are passable enough. The production avoids being stodgy or looking road-companyish; and the capers are kept under control. It is in no way awful, it is just ex-

tremely ordinary; and perhaps what most depresses one is that something so extremely ordinary should, by present standards, be so acceptably average.

Operetta—even an operetta whose maiden name was *Arms and the Man*—tends to be full of tiresome taradiddles, and often to seem most witless when it tries to be most witty. That (saving the millennium) will always be that; and the answer is not to attempt making things wildly amusing, but to make them seem stylishly spirited. (It is just because people in operetta can't possibly act human that they should act with an air.) The story of *The Chocolate Soldier*, even when given plenty of romantic rope, is by no means bad; and actually Shaw's opera bouffe could make quite good operetta bouffe if it were done with skill, aplomb and some bright mock-martial flourishes. But this *Chocolate Soldier* is played without style or witty intention, so that its hanky-panky becomes at best stock horseplay. We can't ask operetta performers to be

highly trained actors; but they can at least be taught, for a thing like this, a manner of acting. Even the brighter lines get lost because nobody has been shown how to speak them.

Nor is this production visually what it should be: three first-rate people in their fields all provide let-downs. Jo Mielziner's sets are unalluring, and though Lucinda Ballard's costumes are brilliantly colored and perhaps authentically Balkan, they are seldom attractive. As for the Balanchine ballets, they plainly suffer from not being danced well or even having room enough to be danced in; but at best they are only agreeably second-rate.

As for the cast, Keith Andes, as Bumerli, has a pleasant voice; and Frances McCann, as Nadina, a nice voice and good looks to boot. Billy Gilbert is the main comic of the piece, and is once or twice comical; Muriel O'Malley plays Aurelia very broadly but rather enjoyably.

—LEWIS KRONENBERGER

"The Chocolate Soldier"—continued

The Sun

MARCH 13, 1947

'Chocolate Soldier,' With Enchanting Score, Engagingly Revived at Century.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Broadway turned back the clock again last night, returning to musical comedy of the Bulgarians and the Balkans, and brought to the stage of the Century a hit out of 1909—"The Chocolate Soldier." Those wonderful old songs by Oscar Straus are restored to the New York theater in an engaging and good-looking revival.

They've now tricked up "The Chocolate Soldier" with nice scenery by Jo Mielziner and imaginative costumes by Lucinda Ballard—she puts the victorious Bulgarian Army into some diverting uniforms—and they've subjected the original book and lyrics to revision here and there, without

doing much for the comedy values. Several Straus tunes new to the operetta, and presumably to this country, have been added.

But the biggest asset of "The Chocolate Soldier," now and always, is its lovely music. You still get "My Hero" and the "Let-

ter Song" and "Seek the Spy" and "Forgive" along with the heartaches of the pretty Nadina and the caperings of the gun-shy, chocolate-devouring Lieut. Bumerli. Actually, the Century's production is now offering a score far more enchanting than that given us in "The Red Mill" or that we're now getting from the successful "Sweethearts."

J. H. Del Bondio, and Hans Bartsch, the producers, and Felix Brentano, the director, have come up with a decorative, charming and spirited Nadina in the red-headed Frances McCann, who looks the part and really sings it. Keith Andes is a little too coy at times as Bumerli but is vocally excellent. Gloria Hamilton, bearing a resemblance to Miriam Hopkins now and then, has a lot of bounce and gayety as Mascha and Muriel O'Malley is very good as Aurelia.

I wasn't overpowered by the massive Billy Gilbert in the role of Popoff, a warrior of many Bulgarian wars, but readily con-

cede that he works hard, never gives up, and gets considerable fun from the material that the original librettists and the 1947 revision experts, Guy Bolton and Bernard Hanighen, have given him. I could also go along with "The Chocolate Soldier" without the ballet, but if it must be done Mary Ellen Moylan and Francisco Moncion are good to have around.

Henry Calvin is very amusing as the spy-seeking Massakroff, of the terrifying visage, and Ernest McChesney, in the role of the stuffy Alexius, has the best male voice in the company. Jay Blackton does a lot with his musical direction, as he did with the orchestrations.

There's an occasional flatness to the proceedings at the Century, and now and then the goings-on seem dated, but always pleasantly so, and the score never lets you down. "The Chocolate Soldier," having survived two wars, is deserving of a revival. Del Bondio and his associates have given it a genuinely good one.



New York World Telegram

MARCH 13, 1947

'Chocolate Soldier' an Anemic Vet

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It would take the most avid operetta fan who likes to wallow in nostalgia to enjoy the revival of "The Chocolate Soldier," which opened last night.

The characteristic elements of the trite old charmers are there, but this production lacks refreshment and excitement. It strikes only occasional sparks.

The cast as a whole is perfectly efficient, but it seemed last night to be suffering from brain fog as if a 24-hour rehearsal had ended just before the curtain raised.

The story is at best a vague one, with a single situation and no motive at all for what follows. This need not be a fault, for a musical book is at best intended

as a plain cake to be iced. The proof here is in the icing.

Lacks Inspiration.

Aside from some unusual and effective costumes the show lacks inspiration and distinction. The voices are better than average, but they never stir you.

The first act seems more like a play with music than an unabashed musical. In a languid mood it tells how a charming Swiss mercenary is protected from the Bulgarian army by a lonely girl, her cousin and her mother. The other two acts get the cousin matched with the girl's fiancé so she can marry the Swiss.

The music has a certain amount

of light charm, but "My Hero" remains the only song you remember.

Obvious Comedy.

Billy Gilbert gets chief feature billing as the prominent Bulgarian whose family rescues the Swiss. Whether you like his obvious comedy or not he provides the show with its most authoritative moments, and has more pace and projection than anyone else on stage.

As his potentially erring wife, Muriel O'Malley, has a style for this sort of thing, and sings her bits expertly.

Of the younger generation,

Keith Andes comes through as the leading personality. Resembling a romantic juvenile version of James Cagney, he plays the Swiss soldier with a glint of humor. He sings a healthy lyric and is not afraid to build the thin situations with stage business.

Frances McCann has a sure clear voice for the heroine, and Gloria Hamilton makes a pleasant mix of her cousin.

Odd Color Combinations.

Lucinda Ballard uses odd color combinations to interesting effect in the costumes. Her hues suggest the eastern Mediterranean. She has bedecked the wedding scene strikingly, with gold grain head dresses for the girls and a pale gold dress for the bride.

"The Chocolate Soldier" has had transfusions from a number of contributors, but they have not overcome his anemia. The humor is so familiar that in just being spoken it is astonishing. The dances are conventional embers of a fiery art. The direction gives the show no speed or excitement.

The atmosphere of the show resembles one of those tricks of memory that makes you feel an incident has happened to you before, and a good many times.